LOWER-VOLUME CORRIDORS
PLANNING GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Not every transportation corridor will warrant development of a full-scale Corridor Plan. As an alternative to full-scale Corridor Plans, Lower-Volume Corridor Plans should be developed for transportation corridors that carry relatively low traffic volumes and substantially meet the criteria listed below. The criteria are not intended to provide strict rules, but to provide the basis for making a judgment about the appropriate level of planning for each corridor. The criteria are based primarily on the criteria that distinguish Simple and Complex projects in the *ITD Design and Concept Report* manuals.*

Like full-scale Corridor Plans, Lower-Volume Corridor Plans are to be developed with a 20-year horizon, but they may be less comprehensive and include a less intensive public involvement process. Therefore, they should cost less and require less time to prepare than full-scale Corridor Plans. It is estimated that Lower-Volume Corridor Plans will require eight to twelve months to prepare, while full-scale plans require eighteen to twenty-four months. Like full-scale Corridor Plans, Lower-Volume Corridor Plans should be reviewed and updated every five years, or sooner if conditions require.

Figure 1 shows the type of plan anticipated for each of the highway corridors on the State Highway System. However, a decision regarding the appropriate type of plan for each corridor should be made only after evaluating the corridor's physical and operating characteristics and assessing its compliance with the criteria listed in the next section. After assessing the criteria or at any time during the planning process for a Lower-Volume Corridor, a decision to develop a full-scale Corridor Plan could be made if circumstances require. The Lower-Volume Corridor Guidelines are written and organized to facilitate an easy transition from one to the other.

CRITERIA FOR LOWER-VOLUME CORRIDORS

It would be appropriate to prepare a Lower-Volume Corridor Plan when,

- most maintenance and improvement projects anticipated for the corridor would be confined within the existing highway right-of-way, although minor right-of-way acquisition may be necessary for safety, bridge, and minor widening projects, like

  - turning, acceleration, and deceleration lanes for safety purposes
  - minor intersection improvements for safety purposes
  - bridge rehabilitation and replacement
  - minor widening of highway shoulders or existing travel lanes for safety purposes
  - installation of vehicle turnouts for safety purposes
  - installation of traffic signals for safety purposes

- major capacity-increasing or realignment projects or projects involving major changes in roadway geometry are not anticipated for the corridor

- a significant amount of public controversy is not anticipated

The following data and information would also be helpful in making a decision regarding the appropriate level of planning:

- highway capacity and accident data
- land-use characteristics and anticipated future growth in population, development, and travel demand
- potential environmental issues
- significant public controversy

PROCEDURE AND CONTENT FOR LOWER-VOLUME CORRIDOR PLANS

Procedurally, Lower-Volume Corridor Plans should involve the same basic steps used when preparing full-scale Corridor Plans, but their content should be scaled back to a level appropriate to the needs of the corridor. The guidelines for Lower-Volume Corridor Plans described below are intended to be flexible enough to facilitate variation in focus and level of effort from corridor to corridor within the lower-volume category. It is important that these guidelines not be used as a stand-alone set of steps for developing Lower-Volume Corridor Plans, but should be read and used with reference to the guidelines for full-scale Corridor Plans.

At a minimum, all Lower-Volume Corridor Plans should include goals and objectives and improvements that address the Division of Highways' four focus areas identified in the Department's Strategic Plan. The focus areas are: roadway surface conditions; critical bridges; highway safety; and, within the limitations described in the Lower-Volume Corridor Plans criteria, highway congestion. All Lower-Volume Corridor Plans should also include a schedule and the projected cost of pavement rehabilitation and pavement maintenance projects.

GUIDELINES FOR LOWER-VOLUME CORRIDOR PLANS (The steps in these guidelines refer back to the steps included in the guidelines for full-scale Corridor Plans found in the *Idaho Corridor Planning Guidebook*

Step 1 - Develop a Corridor Work Plan - The purpose of the Work Plan is to establish a framework for developing the Lower-Volume Corridor Plan. It can be very brief, but should include at least the following elements:

- A list of and time schedule for key activities and decision points in the planning process
- A description of the corridor boundary
- A consultation and public participation plan

Step 2 - Research Existing Conditions of the Transportation System - Existing transportation conditions should constitute the core of a Lower-Volume Corridor plan, as they do in a full-scale Corridor Plan, but it is not necessary to prepare a separate report. Development of this element should follow the general guidelines for full-scale Corridor Plans, including an inventory of existing modes present on the corridor.

Step 3 - Document Existing and Projected Environmental and Land Use Conditions

Land Use and Zoning - Existing land use and zoning remain important elements in the plan, but it is only necessary to provide information for land immediately adjacent to the highway and any additional land for which developments of regional significance are planned or appear to be feasible. Federal, Tribal, state, and local officials should be consulted and long-range, comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances should be reviewed to identify possible developments that may be regionally significant.

Environmental Scan – The Environmental Scan may be limited to those areas where projects are anticipated. The scope of the Environmental Scan should be based on the type and scope of each project recommended in the Lower-Volume Corridor Plan. At a minimum, the Scan should include identification of wetlands, historic and cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, and any additional environmental issues that are pertinent. ITD 654 and 654-A forms may be used to identify additional issues that should be included in the Scan.

Areas where only pavement maintenance and pavement rehabilitation projects are scheduled in the last two 5-year project increments may be excluded from the Environmental Scan. (See Step 6.)

Step 4 - Analyze Future (20-year) Travel Demand and Performance in the Corridor

The travel demand forecast for a Lower-Volume Corridor Plan may rely primarily on the existing ITD methodology that utilizes an historical growth rate for Annual Average Daily Traffic by road segment. However, professional judgment may be necessary to revise the growth rate if the area is experiencing unusual growth or decline. If currently available traffic counts are not based on actual traffic counts that have been performed recently, then new counts should be performed.

Step 5 - Review the Corridor Boundary, Develop a Statement of Purpose and Need, and Identify Goals for the Corridor.

Corridor Boundary - The standard corridor boundary for lower-volume corridors is the existing right of way and adjacent land.

Corridor Goals and Objectives and Purpose and Need - For most Lower-Volume Corridor Plans the standard Purpose and Need and set of Goals and Objectives included in this Guidebook will support the limited needs to be addressed on the lower-volume corridors. These are derived from the Division of Highways four focus areas identified in the ITD Strategic Plan. As stated above, the four focus areas are:

- roadway surface conditions
- critical bridges
- highway safety (e.g., signs, turning lanes, signals, intersection modifications, shoulder widening, vehicle turnouts)
- highway congestion, within the limitations described in the Lower Volume Corridor Plan criteria.

Other Issues - Other policy issues, such as access management, functional classification, and the like, should be reviewed, and goals and objectives addressing them should be developed as needed.

Step 6 - Generate Improvements or Other Measures to Meet Goals - At a minimum, improvements addressing the goals and objectives should include a schedule of pavement rehabilitation and pavement maintenance projects, needed bridge improvements, safety improvements, and improvements, projects, or programs addressing other identified issues. Highway safety, and not a need to increase highway capacity, should be the primary basis for improvements such as turning lanes, intersection modifications, shoulder widening, vehicle turnouts, and signals. If the planning process indicates a need to increase highway capacity, then a full-scale corridor plan should be prepared.

Recommended improvements, projects, and programs should be shown on a timeline subdivided into approximately four 5-year project increments, along with an estimate of the cost to implement each improvement, project, or program. The scope of the analysis and documentation supporting the recommended improvements and other projects or programs should be based on the type and scope of the recommended measures.

Step 7 - Prepare Lower-Volume Corridor Plan Document –A document should be prepared for each Lower-volume Corridor Plan. It should include the data, information, analysis, and results generated by the planning process, as well as the standard navigational elements found in a document, such as a cover, title page, table of contents, and list of figures and charts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FOR LOWER-VOLUME CORRIDOR PLANS

Since major capacity improvements and major realignments should not typically be among the improvements recommended for Lower-Volume Corridors, an abbreviated public involvement process is possible. The following steps are recommended:

1. Meet with elected officials, agency representatives, and the public early in the planning process to identify issues and concerns. This may help refine the Work Plan if unexpected issues are identified.

2. Meet again with elected officials, agency representatives, and the public to review recommended improvements.

3. Notify elected officials, agency representatives, and the public of the availability of the draft document, and distribute it widely – for example, to libraries, city halls, county courthouses, and others requesting a copy. A two to three week review period is recommended to solicit final comments before finalizing the planning document.

*The criteria and guidelines for Lower-Volume Corridor Plans do not apply to State Highway routes for which only maintenance can be provided, such as gravel-surface routes that carry very low traffic volumes. These maintenance-only routes would require only minimal effort to develop a Maintenance-Only Plan. Although the steps involved in developing a Lower-Volume Corridor Plan would not apply to preparing Maintenance-Only plans, every Maintenance-Only Plan should be made available to the public, so that the public can be informed regarding the intentions of the Department and afforded an opportunity to comment on them.